

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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E.O. 11652: NA
TAGS: PINT, CA
SUBJECT: TRUDEAU CALLS SIX BY-ELECTIONS FOR MAY 24

REF: OTTAWA 206

1. PM TRUDEAU APRIL 5 CALLED SIX BY-ELECTIONS FOR MAY 24 TO FILL FIVE FEDERAL SEATS VACANT IN QUEBEC AND SINGLE SEAT OPEN IN PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND. QUEBEC RIDINGS ARE LANGELIER, LOUIS-HEBERT (BOTH NEAR QUEBEC CITY), TERRE-BONNE, VERDUN (IN MONTREAL AREA) AND TEMISCAMINGUE (IN RURAL, CENTRAL QUEBEC). PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND (P.E.I.) RIDING IS MALPEQUE.

2. TRUDEAU, AT APRIL 5 PRESS CONFERENCE, CLAIMED HE HAD NEVER VIEWED QUEBEC BY-ELECTIONS AS "MINI-REFERENDUMS" ON UNITY ISSUE. THIS COMMENT CONTRASTS WITH HIS JAN 26 PRESS CONFERENCE STATEMENT "YES...WHATEVER MY OWN WISH, IT'S CERTAIN THAT THEY WILL BE INTERPRETED AS THE FIRST DEMOCRATIC EXPRESSION BY THE QUEBECKERS ON THE PROBLEM OF FEDERALISM AND QUEBEC SINCE THE ELECTION OF NOV 15.

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AND AS A RESULT, I THINK THAT IT WOULD BE VERY IMPORTANT TO INTERPRET WHERE THE QUEBECKERS ARE--WHERE THE VOTERS ARE IN THOSE RIDINGS VIS-A-VIS THEIR OWN THOUGHTS REGARDING FEDERALISM."

3. COMMENT: IN OUR VIEW LIBERALS SHOULD WIN FOUR OF FIVE QUEBEC ELECTIONS, WHETHER VOTERS VIEW THEM AS "MINI-

REFERENDUMS OR NOT. RIDING WHERE LIBERALS WILL PROBABLY FACE STRONGEST OPPOSITION IS TEMISCAMINGUE, WHICH WAS FORMERLY HELD BY SOCIAL CREDIT (SOCRED) LEADER REAL CAOUCETTE AND WHICH IS BEING CONTESTED FOR THE SOCRED BY CAOUCETTE'S SON, GILLES CAOUCETTE. IN CONTRAST TO COMPARATIVE OPTIMISM OF SEVERAL MONTHS AGO, PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATIVE OPERATIVES HERE NOW CANDIDLY DISMISS LIKELIHOOD OF THEIR WINNING ANY OF QUEBEC SEATS, ALTHOUGH THEY CLAIM THEIR VOTE PERCENTAGES WILL GROW IN MOST. INTERVENTION OF PARTI QUEBECOIS (PQ) VOTERS FOR PC CANDIDATES TO EMBARRASS LIBERALS IS A POSSIBILITY BUT IT IS MORE LIKELY PQ WILL MAKE NO EFFORT TO POINT THEIR SUPPORTERS IN EITHER DIRECTION.

4. MALPEQUE SEAT IN P.E.I. IS HARD TO HANDICAP. IT BECAME VACANT WHEN PC HOUSE MEMBER ANGUS MACLEAN RESIGNED TO TAKE UP LEADERSHIP OF PROVINCIAL PC PARTY. MACLEAN HAD SERVED IN COMMONS SINCE 1951 BUT HIS LEGACY WILL BE MINIMAL SINCE P.E.I. TRADITIONALLY VOTES PERSONALITIES RATHER THAN PARTIES. PC SOURCES TELL US THEY WILL HAVE MORE ATTRACTIVE CANDIDATE AND APPEAR OPTIMISTIC BUT RESULTS NOT A FOREGONE CONCLUSION. ENDERS

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